

# The Public

A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy &  
A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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## EDITORIAL

### Presidential Politics.

Military metaphors are neither perfect nor agreeable for political purposes, but they are the usual ones and the handiest. Let us not be too critical of their use.



The quadrennial fight in American politics is about to begin; its primary object the election of another temporary king for another term, its larger effect a stimulation of public opinion—in the direction of fundamental democracy, let us hope.



After long and busy preparations, American citizenship is just now in the summer lull before the autumn clash and crash. It is as the dreamy night before tomorrow's battle. Five armies are in bivouac on the field, officered, equipped and eager for the fight. This is the hour, then, for conscientious voters to inspect those various groups, to scrutinize their banners, to note the direction of their battle front, to consider their fighting possibilities. It is a time for emotion, but it is also a time for thought.



### The Prohibition Party.

Permanent side-parties are of little or no political value,\* and the Prohibition Party is distinctly

\*See Publics of November 5, 1898, page 6; April 13, 1901, page 3; December 28, 1907, page 917; November 13, 1908, page 775, and December 25, 1908, page 915.

a permanent side-party. For almost forty years its candidates and committees have gone through political maneuvers without voting strength, always expectant but always lost to sight and sound in the smoke and noise of political battle.



The object of the Prohibition Party, obliteration of a destructive and despicable traffic, is of the worthiest; however menacing to legitimate liberties its policy of arbitrary coercion may be, and however futile its tactics.



As an educational force, this party has doubtless served a useful purpose, though meagerly in comparison with other influences. But the principal purpose of political parties is not general education; it is immediate or progressive realization. As an educational device a permanent side-party in politics is uneconomical. More can be done with less energy for civic education by non-political methods, or by political methods that are occasional or local.



Worse than uneconomical for educational purposes, permanent side-parties tend to become obstructive of their own ends. When education begins to ripen in public opinion, the narrow partisanship which such parties foster thrusts itself as an obstruction in the way of political realization.



But the Prohibition Party offers itself for inspection. Its banners are sincere; its titular leader, Eugene W. Chafin, is both sincere and able; its battle front is toward higher levels. Its fighting possibilities, however, must be put at zero for the coming battle. Yet its tents offer a clean refuge for any who in their politics may be hopelessly sick and sore of heart.



### The Socialist Party.

By its name the Socialist Party invites inspection by American citizenship on the eve of this year's Presidential battle.



Considered as a party in American politics, the Socialist Party is open to the criticisms and entitled to the commendations that apply to the Prohibition Party. So considered, it also is a permanent side-party; though it has a larger and more tenacious voting strength. With a steadily increas-

ing vote nationally, and temporary victories locally, it offers unusual reasons for its political hopes. Its largest national vote, however, is prophetic of its impotence in the Presidential battle of the present fall. Yet its tents offer another clean refuge to the politically sick and sore of heart—irksome though the discipline of its camp may be.



But it is not fair—neither to the inspecting voter of conscience and thought nor to Socialists—to consider the Socialist Party as a party like other parties in American politics. Its primary object is to develop a world-wide industrial republic. To this object all its political and economic demands are subordinated. Not, then, as a political party is the Socialist Party to be considered, but as an American branch of the inchoate world-state which its members think of as yet to be.



### The Republican Party.

With President Taft as its candidate, the regular Republican Party has the historical significance of the Democratic Party of those four years that ended when President Lincoln's first term began. The Republican candidate is of the Buchanan type personally; his party is of the bourbon type organically.



Whether Mr. Taft will be second or third when the votes are counted, no one dares to predict with any sense of responsibility. Though there be many whose hopes boldly garb themselves in prophecy, it is utterly impossible, in this lull before the battle, to more than guess what the result will be. It is the best guess by far that Mr. Taft will be badly beaten, but this early guess is subject to battle tides. Also to political and business diplomacy. McKinley's first election, a manifest impossibility in August, 1896, was an accomplished fact the next November; and although Buchanan's party got its death blow in 1856, it lingered until its defeat in 1860.



That the standpat Republican party is disintegrating is plain enough; that its candidate will be defeated in November is highly probable; that he will be a bad third may be anticipated reasonably. But there is no enduring certainty that he may not squeeze through, nor that his party may not survive yet a little while. Worshipers of success need not abandon Mr. Taft's party before the

battle, merely from fear of its weakness at the polls. He who likes the bedraggled banner it carries and the plutocratic morass in which it makes its desperate stand, may possibly find a comfortable political home in the "Grand Old Party" this fall. More than a transient refuge, too, it may be, notwithstanding the present great probability of irretrievable defeat in November.



### The Progressive Party.

This is not yet a new party; it is a Republican "bolt." So far as prognostications are at present possible it will never be anything but a Republican "bolt" unless it becomes *the* Republican Party. Were it to win the election, it would probably take the place of the Republican Party in American politics; and not as a new party, but as the Republican Party reformed. Should it be second at the election, the same thing would probably result, unless the Democratic Party proved reactionary under Wilson's leadership, as it did under Cleveland's. Should the Progressive Party come in a good third, it may form the inviting nucleus or the obstructive agency (according to circumstances) for a genuine new party, provided Taft is re-elected, or if Wilson, being elected, proves recreant to his democratic professions. Much of this is conjecture, to be sure, but the solid fact remains that the Progressive Party is as yet only a Republican "bolt" and not a new party.



The platform of the Progressive Party is very like that religious creed of a new sect, into which every one who joined the sect was allowed to insert a declaration of his own most cherished faith. From direct legislation and woman suffrage, to Southern State-pensions for Confederate veterans, if anything is omitted it must be because its friends were collectively and individually overlooked. Except, of course, a demand for enforcement of the Constitutional guarantees of Negro suffrage, and a declaration for the Singletax—both of which were urged, perhaps injudiciously, and both of which were ruled out with deliberate prudence. Yet most of the platform demands are good ones. Either in practical execution of the democratic principle, such as direct legislation and woman suffrage, or for special ameliorations pending greater progress in democracy, as the industrial demands, they make a strong appeal to democratic emotions. But they are like a bundle of sticks unbundled. There doesn't seem to be in the whole platform a clear declaration of any unifying political or economic principle with which to hold them together consistently.

Of the leading candidate—but let him pass for the present. The principal consideration now is not the leading candidate but the party; and the party not alone in respect of what it promises, but also of its possibilities of performance.



### The Democratic Party.

Notwithstanding the uncertainties of the battle before him, Wilson's election seems now assured. It seems, too, that Roosevelt will be second to him in the order of the popular vote, and Taft third. Whichever the result in that respect, however, the election of Wilson promises a new era in the politics of this country, and a better one than it has experienced since the issue of chattel slavery submerged the old parties of the '50's.



If Wilson is elected and proves courageously true to the democratic principles and policies he professes, the old Democratic Party, regenerated, will probably be the new party on the side of fundamental democracy,—driving out of it its plutocrats and spoilsmen, and attracting to it the mass of men and women of democratic impulses and purposes regardless of race or class. Its adversary will then most likely be the *plutocratic* Republican party of Taft, if Roosevelt's party "flukes" in this campaign; the *paternalistic* Republican party of Roosevelt, should Roosevelt drive Taft from the field. The latter possibility is to be preferred, for it would tend to align aggressive paternalism against aggressive democracy in the campaigns of the future.



In Wilson's acceptance speech the democratic principle shines like a star. It is especially luminous for interpretative purposes in connection with what he says of bounties for American ships. Restrictions upon American shipping are by Roosevelt's policy to be perpetuated, their deadening effects to be overcome with bounties. But in Wilson's view, bounties will not be needed if restrictions are removed. This comparison illustrates the contrast between Roosevelt's paternalism and Wilson's democracy in almost every other respect also. On the point of principle, it is the key to the whole situation.



### Wilson or Roosevelt?

With the progressive purpose and present appearance of political vitality of the Progressive Party, a strong disposition to rush into it is nat-

urally felt on all sides. This feeling in Republican circles is a hopeful sign. Abandonment of the Republican Party by its rank and file shows that the regenerative processes which the Democratic Party has experienced for sixteen years, have at last struck deep into the Republican Party; and by the same token, that though the Progressive Party continue to be only a Republican "bolt," the conditions for a new party are nevertheless ripe in both the old parties, if the necessity for one arises.



But the wholesomeness of any precipitate rush from the Democratic Party to the Progressive Party is not so obvious. Had Harmon been nominated by the Democrats to contest the election of Taft, a new party would have sprung spontaneously out of both the old ones. But Bryan's defeat of the Interests and their political henchmen at Baltimore, and the consequent nomination of Wilson, postponed if it did not altogether remove all necessity for a new party at this time.



In some localities it may well be wise for democratic Democrats to go with the Progressives. This is probably true of a State like Rhode Island, a rotten borough of plutocratic Republicanism, with no Democratic Party to speak of. It is doubtless true where Democratic oligarchies rule with reckless indifference to human rights, as in the South. But in States where progressive sentiment can fairly hope to dominate the Democratic Party, it would hardly seem the best of judgment for democratic Democrats to go hunting with Theodore Roosevelt at the moment when they are needed to secure final control of the Democratic Party for fundamental democracy—at a time, moreover, when this party and its leadership offer high and reasonable hopes of realizing all that the Progressive Party could give, and more than it probably would give, if it happened to be triumphant.



Emotion might account for such a course, but where would be the wisdom of it? Mr. Taft's managers could hardly wish for better luck than a rush of progressive Democrats in doubtful States over into the Progressive Party to offset the rush of progressive Republicans away from himself. It could not by reasonable possibility elect Roosevelt, even if that were desirable. It would tend at least to defeat Wilson, which is not desirable.



But these are transition times. Men are scattering in all directions, politically, and it is best

that each should act upon his own rational impulses. After the election, an account of stock may be taken. If the Progressive Party, now only a Republican faction, shall then have proved its mettle as a political pioneer and demonstrated its right to be the new party should a new party be needed, the time will have arrived for democratic Democrats to consider whether or not this is the new party they long for. That time may come before the election. Much depends upon Governor Wilson. But if it is yet here, we at least are bound to plead inability to see it. Meanwhile let no one overlook the great value of the upheaval that is taking place. The scattering mentioned above is evidence of independent thinking. Said a Negro leader after Roosevelt's nomination, "Until now I could look in a black man's face and know what he was thinking, but not any longer. We are all thinking for ourselves now, and breaking the ranks of race." That observation applies more widely than to any race, to any interest, to any cult.



#### Democratic Nominations in Michigan.

Woodbridge N. Ferris and J. W. Helme, democratic Democrats by the acid test, are unopposed candidates at the Michigan primaries on the 27th for the Democratic nomination for Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Michigan. Their election in November is greatly to be desired. Another Democrat of the democratic kind, also by the acid test, is George P. Hummer of Grand Rapids, who is a candidate at the primaries for the Democratic nomination for United States Senator. As he is opposed, a vote for him at the primaries is as important now as one for any of the three may be in November.



#### The Whiskey Ring in Ohio.

The efforts of the whiskey ring—both overhand and underhand—to defeat woman suffrage at the special election on September 3d in Ohio, ought to bring support to that amendment from every decent town and every clean home in the State. About woman suffrage as an abstract question, men and women may fairly disagree; but the active opposition of so debauching an agency as the whiskey ring is too significant and sinister to leave any leeway for debate over abstractions.



The Waterbury Republican has a keen and nimble wit, coupled with admirable foresight. It advises its readers to vote for Taft, pray for Roosevelt, and bet on Wilson.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.